

90th Anniversary of Grand Canyon N.P. Podcast
Park Superintendent Steve Martin and Ranger Patrick Gamman
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Patrick: Welcome to Grand Canyon's 90 birthday podcast. This is Ranger Patrick Gamman and here with me today is my special guest Park Superintendent Steve Martin. Welcome to the podcast.

Steve: Well, thanks. This is a really exciting time in the history of Grand Canyon and we are very excited about the upcoming events.

Patrick: On February 26, 1919 it was President Woodrow Wilson who signed Senate Bill 390 creating Grand Canyon National Park. Can you tell our audience what was important about the creation of this national park at that time and what important role is the Grand Canyon taking today?

Steve: Well, leading up to the designation of the park by President Wilson in 1919 Grand Canyon had been recognized by Teddy Roosevelt and other dignitaries and explorers as one of the most remarkable places on Earth. When President Roosevelt came out was he so impressed with Grand Canyon he made several statements including, "Be sure that we do nothing to mar the beauty of this wonderful place." That actually helped outline what would become the creation of the National Park Service and later the creation of the park. Ninety years ago the canyon was recognized as a remarkable place and if anything, over the last century it is more appreciated today.

Patrick: In just 10 years, Grand Canyon National Park will celebrate its 100th anniversary - what is the state of the park today and what do you think the state of the park will be on the 100th anniversary?

Steve: I think it has certainly gone from a national park that has been recognized after the turn of the last century as an incredible treasure to the people of the United States to one where it is a treasure to the people of the world. Also, the challenges of managing national parks in present day United States in many ways is much more difficult than when the park was created in 1919. With Climate change, water issues, and concerns over land development there are pressures on the park that never would have been imagined ninety years ago. However, I will say that with the focus on protection of parks and the incredible staff that we have that we feel we're up to those challenges and on its 100th anniversary Grand Canyon will be in better shape than it is in today.

Patrick: You have set many goals for Grand Canyon National Park in your short tenure here...and you have already accomplished many of these goals. What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years to ready the park for the next centennial?

Steve: I think we have many challenges. Some of those are actually stepping up to accommodate the visitors that come from all over the world and also to embrace the changing demographics of the country reaching out to youth, reaching out to the diverse cultural mix that makes up the population of the United States. Also working in the larger landscape within the Colorado plateau to come up with strategies to protect Grand Canyon. But not just Grand Canyon, work

with the Indian tribes that surround us, the communities, and make sure that we are part of a vibrant community effort to take care of these wonderful assets that the country has.

Patrick: Here is a “big picture question for you”:

Grand Canyon National Park is a world heritage site, one of the seven natural wonders, an international icon and the economic engine for the Colorado Plateau. However, the park is facing many issues and economic shortfalls. The National Park Service is entrusted with protecting one of the world's most spectacular landscapes and internationally renowned destinations - What is the National Park Service doing that will help preserve the park's multifaceted environment and maintain Grand Canyon's status in the world and as a park?

Steve: The first steps that we are taking are to make sure we really understand the park. It is interesting that, even though we have been here and managing the park for ninety years that there are still many aspects of the natural environment that we do not fully understand. The first steps are to continue with research program and evaluation that really allows us to understand, what are the requirements to take care of the Grand Canyon? Not only the scenery, but the incredible ecosystem that it protects. Also, I think that it is important that we step up to the challenges that have been placed on us with all of these national and international titles that we have received. Since we are a world heritage site, we are a national park, we are one of the seven natural wonders of the world it raises the bar. We have to look at all of our facilities, we have to look at our programs of interpretation and education, and how we live up to this incredible standard that has

been set. I think to do that we have to take some really bold steps to speak out on what is required to take care of the park. Also to make sure we are taking care of our employees because they are the stewards of the park over the next hundred years.

Patrick: For over the last 100 years the Verkamp family has run a curio shop on the south rim of Grand Canyon national Park. Just a few months ago the National Park Service bought the building from the family and now with our park partner, Grand Canyon Association it is being opened as a visitor center. What can you tell us about the role the Verkamp family had during the first century of the park's history and how will their history be preserved in this new visitor center?

Steve: The Verkamp family moved to the park and began to be a part of the history of Grand Canyon before we became a national park and they chose after all of this time to not continue the family business on the rim. We were very fortunate as the park to purchase to be able to purchase the building and open what is really only our second visitor facility that is on the rim of the Grand Canyon. The theme of that building is the history of Grand Canyon the settlement of the people that who came to take care of the tourist and the people who live here. So we are really excited to have this opportunity and we are sad that the Verkamp family is moving on to other enterprises and undertakings. We think that the Verkamp name is will be well preserved there as well as the history of the Grand Canyon. It is something we can share with our visitors who come here and want to learn about what has gone on at Grand Canyon for the last ninety or one-hundred years.

Patrick: This visitor center will be dedicated during our 90th Anniversary Celebration and the opening of the Verkamp Visitor Center will on February 26th, 2009 and 1:30pm. So, Steve thanks for joining us on the podcast.